

Hemant Thobbi, Cupertino, CA  
29th Jan 2016

(This is detailed version of my brief request I made in person on Jan 22nd 2016, in front of the commission's hearing in Sacramento)

To  
The Members of Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department Of Education, Sacramento, CA.

Hello all members.

Subject: Eliminate the discrimination against Hinduism; Add fair references.

I am Hemant Thobbi, a twelfth grader from Monta Vista High School in Cupertino. I am here to talk about how Hinduism and India, is portrayed in the 6th and 7th grade textbooks.

From what I can remember, the textbooks overemphasize the negative aspects of Hinduism while talking about the positive contributions of all other societies and especially the western society. When people think of Indians and Hinduism, people either think of Cow Lovers or people who break out into song and dance at any pause. These stereotypes create an impression about us Hindus as a backward community with outdated practices and nothing to contribute to the modern world. The lessons in the classrooms contribute to this degrading view of us Hindus, stereotyping us as a society that is unduly patriarchal, oppressive, and lacking in science, rational thinking, arts, music and aesthetics. Pick any current 6th grade textbook and you will be able to see the vast difference in the portrayal of our religion when compared to the others. Hinduism is not portrayed on par when compared to other religions Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

The Commission has tried to correct a few things like the inclusion of Hindu music and dance and contributions such as mathematics. Thank You, but I believe that this effort has been largely minimal. The latest draft framework, published Nov 20, 2015, still unduly emphasizes the caste system and therefore probably does not find enough space for positive things about my heritage.

According to California law, education code section 60044, a governing board shall not adopt any instructional materials for use in the schools that, in its determination,

contain: (a) Any matter reflecting adversely upon persons on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation, occupation. ... (b) Any sectarian or denominational doctrine or propaganda contrary to law.

I would like to bring to your notice for example the comparison of Jati with a Slaveholding society on lines 887-889 of your most recent framework draft for 6th grade, which I don't think is an accurate comparison and is unfair. I request you to delete this reference.

Similarly deliberate and explicit mention of Untouchability on 6th grade framework lines 874 and 875, while lawfully omitting similar parallels for other cultures is discriminatory. Please remove this reference.

Also, please include contributions such as Arthashastra in 6th Grade framework chapters, an ancient Indian book explaining Economics and Statecraft and other contributions of Hinduism to the world.

Thank you for your time and please do us justice.

Hemant Thobbi  
Cupertino, CA